

Q. Mr. President, what progress do you think can be made today? Do you think the peace process can be improved upon?

The President. I hope so. But I think it's important for me to listen to the leaders here and see what we can do first.

Q. Would you like to return and have a role in the peace process?

The President. Oh, I'd like to return, but I won't be President. And that's—the next American administration that will have to take up that mantle.

Q. Mr. President, will your last act—will one of your last acts be to do something in relation to dissident republican groups, like the Real IRA, and do something in terms of stopping them from fundraising and organizing in the United States?

The President. Well, we've got this whole subject under review as part of our ongoing look

at people who use violence for political or other means, not just here but throughout the world. And I may have something more to say about that later, but not now.

Q. Mr. President, the two men to your left and right, in many ways, hold the key to our future. What can be done—what can the Prime Minister do to bring the two men together, to secure this?

The President. I don't—I think that we'd better get on with our talks. *[Laughter]* I want to give a speech later, but I'd like to get on with the business here.

NOTE: The exchange began at 11:26 a.m. at the Stormont Parliament Buildings. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks to the People of Northern Ireland in Belfast December 13, 2000

The President. Thank you very much. Let me, first of all, thank Prime Minister Blair, First Minister Trimble, Deputy First Minister Mallon, for their strong leadership and their kind and generous remarks today.

I am delighted to be with them, Cherie, Mrs. Trimble, my longtime friend John Hume; Senator George Mitchell, who is here; the Members of the Parliament in Northern Ireland; the Members of the United States Congress and the American delegation over here to my right. I thank Chris Gibson of the Civic Forum and many others who helped to make this day possible. Hillary, Chelsea, and I are delighted to be back in Northern Ireland, and here.

I also can't help noting that this magnificent new arena is new since I was last here in '98—a new team, a new sport, a new facility, a new Northern Ireland. I want to thank the Belfast Giants for letting us use the arena tonight. I understand they don't treat their opponents as kindly as me, and I thank them for that. *[Applause]* Thank you.

Believe it or not, I actually read in the press this reference that said that since I'll be out of work soon—*[laughter]*—that if I can skate

and shoot and I'm not very expensive, the Giants would consider offering me a position. Well, I'm used to absorbing blows, but that's about the only qualification I have. *[Laughter]* Senator Mitchell, however, comes from Maine, where they play hockey all the time, and I think you should consider offering him a position. He is very well suited for it.

Let me say to all of you, I have been honored to be involved in the quest for peace here for almost 8 years now. It has been not a passing interest but a passion for me and my administration and, as many of you know, for my family as well. And I want to say a special word of thanks to my wife and to the women here in Northern Ireland who have worked with her through the Vital Voices program and other things to try to make a contribution to the peace.

I came here 5 years ago for the first time. Now I am back on my third visit. No other American President can say that. I want you to know that I'm here not just because I have Irish roots, like millions of Americans, and not simply because I love the land and the people. I believe in the peace you are building. I believe

there can be no turning back. I believe you are committed to that. And I think it's very important that people the world over see what you are doing and support you along the way.

Some of you may know, I left Dublin yesterday, and I had to drive to Dundalk for this rally we had last night—and there were one or two people there. We had this vast crowd of enthusiastic supporters of the peace. And because the weather was too bad for me to helicopter there and I drove, apparently, some people thought I was going to drive from there to Belfast. So I want to give a special word of thanks to the thousands of people in Armagh who waited along the road. I'm sorry I wasn't there. If I'd known you were there, I would have been there. But thank you for supporting the peace process.

Let me say to the leaders who are here and the others who were involved with the development of the Good Friday accord back in 1998, I remember it very well. I remember how hard Prime Ministers Blair and Ahern, and George Mitchell, and all the leaders here worked on the Good Friday accord. I remember time and time again being called, saying that this or that problem had arisen and maybe the agreement couldn't be reached.

And just before dawn on Good Friday, when the final momentum was building, one of your leaders said to me in a very tired voice—I'll never forget it—"This is a life-and-death meeting." And then he added, "But we'll make it happen." When they did, I remember saying to that person, "Go and claim your moment."

That is what I have to say today. After the Good Friday accord was reached, the people of Northern Ireland sealed it in an overwhelming vote for peace. And so I say, it is still for you to claim your moment.

Look what has happened: a local government representing all the people; everyday problems addressed by local ministers who answer to local citizens—across party lines, I might add, as I have personally witnessed; an Executive that has adopted a budget and a program of government; and along the way, all the sort of messy squabbles and fights that you expect in a democracy.

I mean, look at us; we've been doing it in America for 224 years, and as you might have noticed, we still have these minor disagreements from time to time. *[Laughter]*

I ask you to remember this. The difficulties of sharing power in a free, peaceful democratic

system are nothing compared to the difficulties of not having any power at all or of living with constant insecurity and violence. It's easy to overlook that. When people are in war, they measure the progress by counting victims. When people are involved in peaceful endeavors, it's easy to forget to measure, because the measurement is in pain avoided.

How many children are alive today in Northern Ireland because deaths from sectarian violence are now a small fraction of what they were before the Good Friday accords? How many precious days of normality have been—

[At this point, there was a disruption in the audience.]

The President. Tell you what, I'll make you a deal: I'll listen to you, if you let me finish. *[Applause]* Thank you. Thank you.

[The audience interruption continued.]

The President. I think he rejected the deal. *[Laughter]* I'll tell you what. I'll make you a deal. I'll ignore him if you will. *[Applause]* Thank you.

How many days of normality have you gained because the checkpoints on the border aren't there anymore, because honest people can go to a pub or a school or a church without the burden of a search or the threat of a bomb? You have spent so many years mourning your losses. I hope you will now celebrate with pride and defend with passion the progress you have made.

Just look at this arena here. Ten years ago I'm not sure you could have gotten the investment necessary to build this arena or to revitalize the entire Laganside area. But over the 5 years just passed, as hopes for peace have grown, the economy has grown, manufacturing up 27 percent, foreign investment almost 70 percent, the number of American firms growing from 40 to 100, 22,000 new jobs there alone, more people coming in than moving out.

Once, President Kennedy said that happiness is, I quote, "the full use of your powers along lines of excellence." Today, more and more young people have a chance to fully use their powers along lines of excellence here at home. Of course, there are still challenges, to spread opportunity to the most disadvantaged, to integrate into the mainstream those who have turned their backs on violence. But bitter, old divisions are falling away.

A few months ago, students from St. Joseph's College and Knockbrea High School, who study a half-mile apart, met for the very first time and toured the sights of Belfast. One of them said, "I always just saw their school badge but never talked to them. But when we met, we got on brilliant."

Students from both schools are working with their counterparts from Mullingar Community College in the Republic to promote local recycling efforts. They're all taking part in Civic Link, an initiative supported by the Department of Education in the United States. Give them a hand there. *[Applause]*

This initiative we have supported through the Department of Education, and under your good friend Secretary Dick Riley, it has already brought together some 2,000 students and over 70 schools to break down barriers, build good will, and live lives based on tolerance and mutual respect. So I thank the ones, the students who are here, and I hope more will participate.

Now, amidst all this momentum, why are we having this meeting, and why are all you showing up here? Because we've still got problems and headaches. And I just went through a whole lot of meetings about it.

Two years ago George Mitchell said that implementing the Good Friday agreement would be harder than negotiating it. Why? Well, first, because the devil is always in the details, and second, because human nature being what it is, it's always easier to talk about high-minded change than it is to pull it off, or even to feel it inside.

In spite of the overwhelming support for the Good Friday agreement and the evident progress already brought, opponents of peace still try to exploit the implementation controversies, to rub salt in old wounds, and serve their own ends. And others, for their own purposes, still stand on the sidelines watching and just waiting for something to go wrong. Well, I wanted you all to come together, first to show the world that the great majority of the people of Northern Ireland are still on the side of peace and want it to prevail; second, to say again to the proponents of violence that their way is finished; and third, to reaffirm, even in this great arena, that peace, unlike hockey, is not a spectator sport. No one can afford to sit on the sidelines. The progress that the leaders have made has only been possible because they knew

when they took risks for peace they were acting on the yearning of the people for peace.

For years you have made your view clear: Violence is not the answer; peace is the path to justice. The Good Friday accords define that path. Last week's tragic killings are a brutal reminder of a past we all wish to leave behind, that is not completely gone and a sober reminder that failing to move forward risks slipping backward.

As the promises of the Good Friday accords are fulfilled or deferred, trust between the parties will rise or fall. We have seen that when trust rises and people work together, peace grows stronger, and when trust unravels, peace is made more vulnerable.

The people of Northern Ireland must be clear and unequivocal about your support for peace. Remember, the enemies of peace don't really need your approval. All they need is your apathy.

I do not believe you want Northern Ireland ever again to be a place where tomorrow's dreams are clouded by yesterday's nightmares. The genius of the Good Friday agreement still remains its core principles of consent, equality, justice, respect for each other and for law and order. These ideas are big enough to embody the aspirations, hopes, and needs of all the people of Northern Ireland.

As I said before, your progress in putting these principles into practice has truly been remarkable. But again, we all know there is still much to do before the agreement's vision is fully and finally realized. We know, for example, there must be a full and irrevocable commitment to effecting change only through peaceful means, through ballots, not bullets. That means putting all arms fully, finally, and forever beyond use. Last week's IRA statement on this topic was a welcome development; the followthrough will be even more so.

We welcome the contribution of those paramilitaries observing a cease-fire. Those who reject peace should know there is no place for them to hide. Based on my conversations with Prime Minister Ahern in Dublin yesterday and with Prime Minister Blair today, I want to say that the United States will intensify its cooperation with British and Irish authorities on counterterrorism, to combat groups seeking to undermine the Good Friday accords through violence.

We are going to get experts from the three nations together in the near future, and the United States will continue to work in a systematic way to do whatever we can to help to root out terrorism and to make this peace agreement take hold.

Now, we also know that real respect for human rights must be woven into the fabric of all your institutions. The light this will cast is the best guarantee that political violence will disappear. That's why it is so important to have a police force that inspires pride and confidence in all the people.

Just before our gathering here, I met with victims of the violence, quite a large number of them who lost their children, their husbands, their wives, their limbs, their livelihood. Among them was the widow of an RUC officer and the sister of a slain defense attorney. Together, they offer the best testimony to the need to honor those who unjustifiably sacrificed their lives, their health, or their loved ones. We should honor those who have done their duty in the past while making a fresh start toward a police service that will protect, serve, and involve everyone equally in the years to come.

Finally, and maybe most important of all, for the vision of the Good Friday agreement to be fully realized, all sides must be fully engaged with each other, understanding that they must move forward together or not at all, that for one community to succeed, the whole community must succeed.

Over the last several hours today, I have talked to the parties. I'm convinced they do all genuinely want this peace process to work. They know how far it has come. They know how irresponsible it would be to permit it to fail. On the basis of our discussion, it is clear to me that's what must happen to move the process forward. First, the Patton Report must be implemented, and on that basis leaders from every part of the community must commit to make the new police service work.

There must be security normalization, and arms must be put beyond use. This will lead to a reduction of fear and mistrust on all sides. And somehow these processes must take place together, giving practical effect on the ground to the rhetorical promise of peace.

I think we can do this. Of course, it will be difficult. But I urge the parties, the political parties here, the British and Irish Governments, the communities themselves, to work out the

way forward in the coming days and weeks. And we will do all we can to help.

I have said before to all of you—I did 2 years ago when I was here—how profoundly important peace in Northern Ireland is to the rest of the world.

This morning, when I got up, I saw the Prime Minister of Ethiopia on television, discussing the agreement the United States helped to broker there, between Ethiopia and Eritrea. I have been heavily involved in the Middle East for 8 years now and in many of the tribal conflicts in Africa, in a little-understood border conflict in the Andes, and many other places. And let me tell you, you cannot imagine the impact of the Good Friday agreement in Northern Ireland on troubled regions of the world—in Africa and the Middle East, in Latin America, and, of course, in the Balkans, where the United States has been heavily involved in my time. Peace continues to be challenged all around the world. It is more important than ever to say, but look what they did in Northern Ireland, and look what they are doing in Northern Ireland.

In the end, there has to be a belief that you can only go forward together, that you cannot be lifted up by putting your neighbor down. You know, I think—and I talk in the United States about this a lot—our children will live in a completely different world than the one we have known. Just for example, because of the human genome project, which is going to give us cures for many kinds of cancers—Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, and more important, will give mothers bringing little babies home from the hospital, roadmaps of their children's genetic makeup and future—very soon, life expectancy in places with decent health systems will be over 90 years. And the lives of the young people in this audience, I am convinced, average life expectancy will rise to 100 years.

You will see new sources of energy tapped and new conservation technologies developed that will enable human beings for the first time both to increase wealth and to reduce energy use and global warming, ensuring a longer future on this planet for the great-grandchildren of the youngest people in this audience today. You will be able to, you young people, travel farther and faster through outer space and cyberspace even than people can today. The world will be so different for you.

Now, I think the children of Northern Ireland deserve their fair chance to be a full part of

that future. I believe the people of Northern Ireland want that for their children, and that means the leaders of Northern Ireland must find a way to do what is necessary to give that future to your children.

You know, this is the last chance I will have as President to speak to the people of Northern Ireland. Let me say to all of you that I have tried to be pretty straightforward today in my remarks and not nearly as emotional as I feel. I think you know that I have loved this land and love the work I have tried to do for peace. But the issue is not how I feel; it's how your kids are going to live.

I say to all of you, it has been a great honor for me; it has been an honor for the United States to be involved in the cause of peace in a land that produced the forbearers of so many of present-day America's citizens. I believe that the United States will be with you in the future. I know I will be with you in the future in whatever way I can.

But in the end, I will say again, what really matters is not what America does, and what really matters is not even all the encouragement

you give to people around the world. What really matters is what you do and whether you decide to give your children not your own yesterdays but their own tomorrows.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:06 p.m. at the Odyssey Arena. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom, and his wife, Cherie; First Minister David Trimble of Northern Ireland and his wife, Daphne; John Hume, member, Social Democratic and Labor Party; former Senator George J. Mitchell, who chaired the multiparty talks in Northern Ireland; Chris Gibson, chairperson, Civic Forum; Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland; Deputy First Minister Seamus Mallon of Northern Ireland; and Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Prime Minister Blair, First Minister Trimble, and Deputy First Minister Mallon. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on the Faith Leaders Initiative of the National Conference for Community and Justice

December 13, 2000

Today I want to commend the National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ) on its innovative efforts to further engage the faith community in racial reconciliation. NCCJ's Faith Leaders Initiative builds on my Initiative on Race and the March 9 White House meeting where leaders of institutions of faith announced important new steps as they rededicated themselves to fight racism.

Today's Joint Statement on Racism, drafted and endorsed by a broad group of faith leaders, recognizes the important role of people of faith in fighting racism. It states: "Racism is a problem of the heart and an evil that must be eradicated from the institutional structures that shape our daily lives, including our houses of worship." Those who affirm this statement and make its seven pledges will indeed be part of transforming our society to eradicate racism.

In addition, the directory of promising practices, guidelines for interreligious forums, and list of 10 actions every individual can take to fight racism are significant contributions toward fulfilling our vision of one America.

Many groups and individuals have worked long and hard to develop the initiatives announced today. It will take many more groups and many more individuals to put these initiatives into action. When the National Conference for Community and Justice chose to continue the work of the race initiative within the faith community, I trusted this unique organization to bring new vision and extra vigor to that call. Today's announcement again attests to both its creativity and your commitment. It is only through work such as this that our Nation will truly come to know both racial justice and racial reconciliation—truly be one America.